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Note verbale dated 21 July 2006 from the Permanent Mission of Samoa to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Economic and Social Council

The Permanent Mission of the Independent State of Samoa to the United Nations has the honour to forward herewith a letter dated 20 July 2006 from the Prime Minister of Samoa, Tuilaepa Sailele Malielegaoi, to the President of the Economic and Social Council concerning the recommendation of the Committee for Development Policy that the graduation of Samoa from the least developed country category be considered by the Council at its current substantive session (see annex).

The Permanent Mission would be grateful if the present note verbale and its annex could be circulated as a document of the Council.

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Annex to the note verbale dated 21 July 2006 from the Permanent Mission of Samoa to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Economic and Social Council

I am writing to you in your capacity as President of the Economic and Social Council on a matter of critical importance to my country.

The Economic and Social Council under your leadership will be discussing at its current session in Geneva the report of the Committee for Development Policy wherein the Council is being asked to endorse the graduation of Samoa from the category of least developed countries. This recommendation is based on Samoa's having met for the second consecutive review two graduation criteria (gross national income per capita and human assets index).

My Government's view on the least developed country graduation criteria is on record. In essence, it is our firm belief that the significance of the "economic vulnerability index" should be highlighted by making it one of the two criteria to be met before a country graduates from least developed country status. Samoa's economic vulnerability index in 2006 was 64.7 which was much higher than the graduation threshold of 38 and represents its poorest level since the 1994 review of the list of least developed countries. This is a statement of fact and undeniable proof that Samoa continues to be economically vulnerable, notwithstanding its positive performance on the other graduation criteria. This is the same conclusion the Committee for Development Policy arrived at.

Moreover, the trend so far whereby none of the countries that recently graduated (Cape Verde, Maldives) or were considered eligible for graduation (Kiribati, Tuvalu, Vanuatu, Equatorial Guinea) had successfully met the economic vulnerability index graduation threshold should be justification enough to make the economic vulnerability index the sine qua non criterion for graduation.

It is no coincidence that the six countries listed above are small island developing States, all of which are inherently and permanently vulnerable to external shocks, both natural and man-made, underscoring yet again the "island paradox" which the Ambassador of Samoa to the United Nations highlighted in his presentation to the Committee for Development Policy in March 2006 during the Committee's consideration of Samoa's graduation. A copy of the statement was made available to you.

It was the above considerations that led to Samoa's request to the Committee for Development Policy that its graduation from the least developed country category be deferred.

In writing to you, my Government is not asking for a review of the graduation criteria. Rather we are requesting the Economic and Social Council's sympathetic consideration with respect to reforming the graduation rule so as to highlight the importance of the economic vulnerability index and to make it one of the criteria to be met before graduation from the list of least developed countries. In our view, the Council has a crucial role to play in assisting highly vulnerable States in achieving and maintaining sustainable development.

It is in this spirit that Samoa remains committed to attending the session of the Economic and Social Council under way, during which the report of the Committee

for Development Policy and the draft resolution on the subject of Samoa's graduation will be discussed.

The Government of Samoa is confident that the Economic and Social Council will deliver on its mandate under your able stewardship.

(*Signed*) Tuilaepa Sailele **Malielegaoi**
Prime Minister